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ABSTRACT

Intercollegiate debate programs are facing a continuing demand for excellence without any guarantee of adequate resources. Important considerations for program administrators include: be positive, not negative; look for opportunities to build alliances with political science or philosophy departments; be a responsible administrator; and deal with potential problems sooner rather than later. Although every funding situation is unique, six strategies can help meet the omnipresent budget challenges which confront intercollegiate debate: (1) become a "winner" based on program design and institutional goals; (2) generate awareness on campus; (3) generate awareness off campus; (4) collect information; (5) make the decisions necessary to meet the established goals; and (6) explore external funding sources. (RS)

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Overcoming Funding Challenges

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Introduction

As the next millennium approaches, intercollegiate debate programs are facing a continuing demand for excellence without any guarantee of adequate resources. To be successful they must have resources, but to get resources they must succeed. A fine example of being between a rock and a hard place.

The purpose of this paper is to offer general strategies to meet the omnipresent budget challenges which confront the activity. This paper has two acknowledged limitations -- every funding situation is unique, potentially requiring specific attention which this paper doesn't offer, and each suggestion requires dedication and patience. No "quick fixes" are included.

If the world was perfect, the value of debate would be acknowledged, celebrated and supported with resources a-plenty. But it's not. For that reason, a director must decide what type of program they believe in, and put the acquisition of resources necessary to achieve their vision at the top of their to-do list. Once that commitment has been made, the steps outlined below should help overcome funding challenges.

Assumptions

The following statements are the assumptions which are NOT dealt with in this paper, but are truths which underlie many budgetary issues.

A common funding challenge is funding uncertainty -- not knowing from year-to-year what budget level will exist. Inconstancy is often a result of student activity fee based funding which is controlled by the student government. **All funding considerations must be moved into the office of an administrator. Student organizations are too fickle to be predicable.** This may mean re-positioning debate as an academic or co-curricular, instead of extra-curricular program. Whatever it takes, do it. It will strengthen the financial position of debate more than any other act.

Most administrators have little or no familiarity with debate as an activity. Many have never seen a debate and far fewer still have any idea what a tournament is or how it operates.

Most administrators have a sound understanding of athletics. They understand the concepts of leagues, national rankings and controlling bodies (NCAA).

Most administrators are looking for ways to "sell" themselves and/or their university to the public and the people to whom they report.

Most administrators have at least small sums ($5,000-$50,000) of "soft" money that they can commit each year. These can be emergency bail-out funds.

The only way to achieve permanent funding is to get a line item in the annual budget--that is known as "hard money".

Most debate programs are within departments and the Director reports to a chair person.

A strong, trusting relationship between the Director and the department's chair and the backing of the department is essential to a debate program's survival.

Most people within a department are as ignorant about debate as the average administrator.

"Putting it in writing" is important. All funding agreements should be in writing. Also, sending written notes of congratulations helps build files -- use memos congratulating others to draw attention to the success of debate and to build friendships. For example, send a memo that praises the hard work /success of your debaters to the department chair and send a copy to the dean. That accomplishes two things, it builds the department's identity with the program and keeps the chair and the dean informed. Frequently such a memo will net a bonus -- the dean and/or chair will respond with a memo of congratulations you can put in <u>your</u> file.

<u>Important Considerations</u>

Make it clear that debate's success reflects positively on the academic department, the school or college, etc., etc.--all the way up the chain of command. Using memos of thanks and congratulations will help build a support base within the institution.

Be positive, not negative in your approach. Use examples from outside the university to show how to build-up a program rather than complain that debate is not receiving its fair share compared to sports or the geology club. Debate probably isn't the only program on the campus that needs more money. By making it an internal zero-sum game within the department or the university, you diminish rather than increase support. By focusing the competition outside the university, the rest of the world becomes the "them" and there is less internal "us against us" which can be devastating.

Lots of debaters are political science or philosophy majors. Look for opportunities to build alliances with the faculty in those departments. If you are recruiting lots of people who wind up as their majors, you need to keep them

informed and happy. That generally involves making certain student debaters go to class, and that you establish a mechanism for informing faculty **in advance** about debate travel.

Be a responsible administrator by putting your professional needs first. Debate can (and will if you allow it) take more time than you have. Until you understand that the "bottom line" is the hard dollars on the budget, and your most important job is to get those budget lines for debate, you aren't doing your job as the director of a debate program. The best way to get those funds is to strengthen your own position within the institution--through tenure and the support of your colleges. BUILD, don't burn bridges. SHARE successes by giving away the trophies you win and telling the people who receive them "thank you," because without their help, you and your students couldn't have won the tea service you just gave them.

Administrators have three options to any request -- accept it, reject it, or do nothing. The absence of a response is a powerful obstacle to overcome. If a proposal is neither accepted or rejected, a director must be prepared to organize a meeting of the appropriate administrators and let them know the problem will not go away. Sometimes it will be necessary to force a yes or no.

Deal with potential problems sooner rather than later. Administrators hate being surprised, so establish appropriate channels of communication for both good and bad news.

No one will ever understand everything you do for your program. The (insert your school's athletic program here) coach will always make more money than you do. And most everyone else on the faculty will have weekends off. But very few of those people will have families that are as large or as close as your "debate family" is. Because when you are a good administrator and help obtain the scholarships and travel funds and computer grants that make it possible for your students to grow as debaters and as people, you make a difference in their lives, and no one could ask for more.

Six Steps to Funding Success
How to "Build-Up"

Step 1 Become a "Winner" Based on Program Design and Institutional Goals.
There is value in all the different forms and expressions of debate that currently exist within higher education. Kudos to those who can do it all, but the reality is that building programs by focusing on a particular niche is much easier. When insufficient resources are the problem, spreading a program thin will do little to provide tangible measures of success.

Everybody wants a winner. The way "winner" is defined should be framed by the goals of your particular program and the mission of your

institution. It could mean having 50 students participate as student debaters -- it could mean the debaters of your school bested the debaters of your athletic rival -- it could mean being in the national top 25 -- it could mean getting 400 high school students on your campus for a one-day debate workshop.

Every college or university has an articulated mission statement. Frequently the other bureaucratic subdivisions will also have mission or goal statements. You must find them and find ways to use debate to meet those goals. It's not hard to do. For example, if the mission statement includes increasing the institution's recruitment or retention rates, discuss the way debate serves those need by enhancing prestige and by actually attracting quality students as debaters. [1]

Sometimes the director will have little or no say in what programmatic expectations are. However, since the process of the debate activity is not well-known outside the community, it is safe to assume most funding sources are ignorant of what is required to operate a debate program.[2] Make that an

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[1] The author is willing to provide a copy of documents she produced to secure permanent funding for the UMKC debate program. To receive a copy, please forward her your name and mailing address.

[2] Some may even be ignorant as to the value of debate. If you want copies of the following articles, send your name and address to the author by standard post or email:

The Assembly class of 1992-94. (1994, May 23). California Journal Weekly.

Bass, C. (1997, June 25). No debate on one point; National champ from Dallas hones talent with hard work. The Dallas Morning News, p. 27A.

Chapel hill high academic teams deserve to be funded . (1994, May 3). Chapel Hill Herald, Forum 4.

Cooper, J. L., Robinson, P, & McKinney, M. (1994). Cooperative learning in the classroom. In D. F Halpern & Associates (Eds.), Changing college classrooms (pp. 74-92). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Corley, A. (1997, April 9). Offering inspiration; Athena program brings lieutenant governor to speak. Anchorage Daily News, p. 2F.

Foege, A. & Harrison, M. (1997, September 29). Word warriors. People Magazine, pp. 75-76.

Fussell, J. (1997, March 16). She's the winning argument. The Kansas City Star, pp. G1, G4.

advantage by providing the information which demonstrates your program's

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King, A. (1994). Inquiry as a tool in critical thinking. In D. E Halpern & Associates (Eds.), Changing college classrooms (pp. 13-38). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Leopold, W. (1990, March 4). Educators target teaching 'Johnny to think' better. Turning students into competent analysts is the goal. Chicago Tribune, p. 6C.

Matsumoto, S. (1995, June 5). Debating on Japan and the jury system. The Daily Yomiuri, p. 9.

101st Congress, Second Session. (1990) U. S. Congressional Record, 136 (51).

Roberts, R. (1994, July 10). Letters from readers [Letter to the editor]. Star Tribune, p. 28A.

Schreiber, E. J. (1996). Muddles and huddles: Facilitating a multicultural workforce through team management theory. Journal of Business Communication, 33 (4), 459-473.

Senkowsky, S. (1997, October 19). The evolution of liberal arts; Society prefers university degrees that lead to jobs, but at what price? Anchorage Daily News, p. 1E.

Sherrow, R. (1996, October 20). Campus corner. Tulsa World, p. D10.

Shibasaki, K. (1993, July 19). U.S. debaters debate debating . The Daily Yomiuri, p. 9.

Shibata, B. (1997, March 3). Resolved: That debate works "SOAPBOX" coauthor shows how debating can boost English skills Daily Yomiuri, p. 17

Schoeder, H. & Ebert, D. G. (1983, April). Debates as a business and society teaching technique. Journal of Business Education.

Toms, D. (1996, January 31). History's future lies in classroom debate. The Scotsman, p. 25.

Willimon, W. H. (1993, October 20). Reaching and teaching the abandoned generation. The Christian Century, 110(29) p. 1016.

The articles fall into three categories -- how debate benefits business and society, the importance of well-funded competitive debate in academia, and examples of how well-supported programs across the country have attracted regional and national, and international attention.

success **and** a comparison which shows the programs ahead of you have **bigger budgets**. This is an example of the principle of ***Building Up.***

Most administrator can identify with ranking systems and with schools that succeed in athletics or academic ratings. Use the opportunity to beat those schools (or are ranked ahead of those school) as part of your message. Administrators also understood that building successful athletic programs require time, assistant coaches, scholarships, etc. The athletic program analogy can be very useful.

Step 2 Generate Awareness On Campus. Send press releases to the campus newspaper(s) with tournament results and other information that helps generate a winning identity. Send those same releases to your campus' internal publications.

This step is also likely to involve communicating with people who have little understanding of debate and what tournaments and travel are like. The frequent result is disinterest and no enthusiasm to assign a reporter or run your releases. The best strategy is to make personal contact with an editor, reporter, bureau chief, etc. Take them to lunch and in a no-pressure situation explain how wonderful the debate program is and ask for their help. Ask their advice about getting some coverage. You might even take along some of your press releases that didn't get published and ask how to make them better. Also make certain you know what deadlines they function under and about any style issues that are peculiar to their publication. One of your message points needs to be how hard the student debaters work, and how much it would mean to them and to you to have some debate coverage. The other important message you must communicate is that readers don't have to be debaters or know lots about it or the topic being debated to be interested in how the squad is doing. The sports analogy is very useful here, too.

Don't expect that establishing rapport with one person solves all your press problems. Campus publication personnel changes regularly, so this is a task you'll probably need to undertake annually.

Keep the department chair informed about debate program successes, and enlist their help. The chair can use debate's progress as "bragging points" to deans and chairs of other departments.

Always be willing to share the glory. Be the first to remind people that the achievements of the debate program reflect positively on the department, the administration and the entire school. By establishing a sense of identity and ownership, when there are funding deficiencies, by extension, there will be a better opportunity to enlist their help

Step 3 Generate Awareness Off Campus. Making a name for the debate program in the community is a building process. Don't overlook the need to meet with your school's public information office. Generally, the press bureau of the institution will want involvement. A lunch meeting with the proper person is strongly encouraged. All of the advice that follows is tempered with the need to stay within the constraints of you institution's press office.

Exposure in the popular press and broadcast media increases internal funding leverage and external funding opportunities. It also becomes an advantage the program can exploit when requesting additional funding.

If your school is in a smaller community, the local newspaper should receive the same press releases and press advisories you are sending to the university paper. In larger metropolitan areas, access to the daily paper depends on persistence and luck. Quicker results can come through weekly shoppers or community papers.

Broadcast media are a special challenge not only because they are harder to interest in a success story, but debate is not very video or audio friendly. A potential breakthrough is to convince the press office of your school to market you as a debate and/or communications expert to the local broadcast press. That way the school's connection with debate is at least established in the identification. Be sure to take a blank video or audio tape with you to the studio so you can walk away with a copy for your "file". If they come to you or record you over the phone, discuss getting a copy of the tape with the segment producer.

Step 4 Collect Information. Administrators and external funding sources deal with measurable results. In order to detail funding needs and quantify non-rankings based success, debate directors must collect data. The data include information about:

⇒ Travel costs. You must know how much **adequate** tournament travel costs. Give administrators accurate figures -- don't cut important corners, and don't pad the budget. Don't neglect expenses which concern **student safety** (e.g. using a cargo van in addition to a passenger van) and class attendance. It costs more to fly, but it is safer and allows students to spend more time in class.

⇒ Recruiting. How many students in the debate program would have chosen to attend school there absent debate? How many potential students does the debate program come into contact with by hosting or judging high school debate tournaments and workshops? Many institutions or departments are actively trying to build enrollment. By documenting recruitment efforts, directors can indicate the opportunity a debate program would bring to the university. The pitch is that by building the program's success through

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increased resources, it will build up the recruiting potential. The argument is that the increased enrollment actually offsets debate program costs with income.

⇒ Potential for debaters to turn into successful alumni (who will then contribute back to their school). Most debaters go on to professional or graduate school and eventually have the income potential to contribute significantly once they have finished their education.

⇒ Success of debaters as students. At UMKC, the average admission test score of debaters is as high or higher than any other student group on campus. It attracts superior students at a more consistent rate than any undergraduate program except the 6-year medical program. All of the UMKC institutionally provided debate scholarships are academic and require a 3.0 GPA for renewal.

⇒ Support Levels of other programs. The essence of ***Building Up*** is taking the accomplishments of other programs and using those as challenges to improve your program. If you can document the correlation between increased funding and competitive success, or increased participation, or however you measure success, you have something administrators can relate to. Never think you have to reinvent the wheel. Using the example of others provides a comfort zone and helps the strategy become the "not wrong" choice. Administrators generally want a predictable result based on an already proven strategy. By using examples tested by other schools, you satisfy that need.

Step 5 Make the Decisions Necessary to Meet the Established Goals. As the director, you control the fate of your program. You make the choices and have the ultimate responsibility for your program. Higher education is taking its cues from the for-profit-sector. You have to make decisions about how that fact effects what is best for the program you run.

Certainly, the best interest of their students is the number one concern of every director. But frequently overlooked is the fact that the debate program is a director's first responsibility because it is the foundation which supports those students. People must come first, and the best way to make that possible is to establish a priority list of resource acquisitions. The ranking depends on each unique situation, but these are the essential building blocks for any program.

- Scholarships
- Travel money
- Photo copy expenses

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- Computers and equipment
- Offices
- Salaries for Assistant Coaches
- Subscriptions

As explained in Step 4, it is important to know the costs and justifications of all of the items, by gathering data.[3]

Step 6 Explore Eternal Funding Sources. This step is for those who have predicable, reasonable funding and are looking for ways to develop additional resources.

Each institution has its own pre-application processes and resources for prospective grant writers. There is grant money for developing debate-based projects available to those with 501 (3) c approval as a not-for-profit corporation. There are no grant-based sources for permanent funding of competitive college debate programs. However, there is likely a local resource or two in your community that might take on fundraising for scholarships or specific equipment.

Before you approach anyone outside your institution, you should take a grant writing course and become familiar with the rules you must observe relative to your institution's development office. Some universities will not allow you to "fund raise" or to solicit money in support of the debate program. This is such a sensitive issue that you should not "apologize rather than ask for permission."

You should find a friend in the development office. (Another person to take to lunch). They usually have a great deal of clout in the upper administration because they are responsible for all the fund raising that goes on outside the university. You need to let them know what a wonderful selling point your debate program can be for the university. It has the competitive appeal of a

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[3] The amounts in the UMKC budget for those items are provided here in a spirit of helping others "build-up".

- Scholarships (7 new [renewable for 4 years] awards each year.)
- Travel money ($75,000)
- Photo copying (we have our own copier and a $2,500 budget in excess of the normal service contract for 5000 copies per month)
- Computers and equipment (successfully responded to internal RFP for computer equipment and secured an $11,000 grant for additional laptops, printers and supplies) [This is not part of the usual budget and required satisfying university guidelines].
- Offices--included within Communication Studies Department. Supplies, phone etc. for offices are part of a $2,500 Debate E & E budget which is independent of the rest of the department.
- Salaries for Assistant Coaches ($20,000). The Director and Assistant Director positions are part of the Communication Studies Department line items for S & W.
- Subscriptions ($0) We rely on library resources.

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sports program (with bragging rights over others) with the scholarly appeal of a research-intensive activity that attracts exceptional students to your campus. Additionally, many of the successful business people probably debated in high school or their children/grandchildren did/do.

Conclusion There is no magic formula for funding. It is a matter of marketing and persistence. To do the marketing, you must know the costs and information, and you've got to know how to approach the people who control the money. Everything takes time which will trade-off with your ability to research, travel, hear practice rounds, (the list goes on and on).

The best advice I can give is --

Do your best, and understand that it will never be "enough" or "everything."

Treat others as you want to be treated -- with respect, kindness, patience and gentle humor; because everyone in the debate activity is struggling to do the impossible.

Build-up, don't tear down. Use the fact that another program has something you need as an argument for more resources that you present to your administration.